

Amendments to the Specification:

At page 1, before line 3, insert "Field of the Invention".

At page 1, before line 7, insert "Background of the Invention".

At page 3, line 30, delete "the Applicant Company has" and insert therefore "Applicants have".

At page 4, before line 3, insert "Detailed Description of the Invention".

At page 4, line 3, delete "Applicant Company has" and insert therefore "Applicants have".

At page 4, line 11, delete "the Applicant Company" and insert therefore, "is"

At page 4, lines 21-22, delete "the Applicant Company" and insert therefore "is".

After page 10, insert the following abstract as a new page.

Abstract

The invention relates to a continuous method for preparing ethyl lactate by means of lactic acid esterification using ethanol in the presence of a catalyst. The inventive method comprises continuously extracting a mixture comprising ethyl lactate, ethanol, water and different heavy products from an esterification reaction medium at partial lactic acid conversion rate and, subsequently, subjecting said mixture to a reduced-pressure flash separation, thereby producing an overhead stream containing a mixture of ethyl lactate, ethanol and water, the lower part of said mixture supplying a fractional distillation column."